

AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

Taxicab Rates, Coupons Go Up

In March, Cambridge taxicabs started charging more for their services—about 17 percent more. On a more positive note, Cambridge taxi discount coupons for Cambridge residents who are elderly or disabled also increased in March, by nearly 15 percent. Coupons issued through this program now have a face value of \$2.00. Up to two coupons can be used per one-way fare over \$6.00.



Cambridge residents with disabilities can receive a break on their taxi costs by enrolling in the City's Taxi Discount Program through the Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Our contact information is on the back page. Residents 60 years of age and up may

enroll in the Taxi Discount Program, through the Cambridge Council on Aging.

According to the Cambridge License Commission, which imposed the rate increases following a public comment period, a ride in a Cambridge taxi now costs \$4.55 for the first mile and \$2.80 for each subsequent mile (35¢ per 1/8 mile).

The License Commission last increased taxicab meter rates in 1998. These increases reflect a commitment on the part of the City of Cambridge to keep taxi rates in line with inflation, and to help taxi drivers realize a living wage.

Meanwhile, in response to consumer complaints about unreliable service, the License Commission moved forward on establishing a centralized dispatching system to coordinate deployment of the City's accessible cabs. Dubbed "Accessible Cambridge Transportation," or ACT, the management program would be funded in its first year through the auction of a new accessible cab medallion, with the bidding starting at \$60,000.

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Grassroots Advocacy Saves Funding for Day Treatment Programs

Little did the clients of Schiff Day Treatment Center on Essex Street in Cambridge know what they were about to hear. On a recent February morning at their usual Monday opening meeting, Tom Dallamora, the psychiatric day center's director had an unpleasant job.

Dallamora announced that Governor Mitt Romney had decided to take away Medicaid (MassHealth) funding from all psychiatric day treatment programs in the Commonwealth on April 1, 2003, resulting in their closing.

After initial disbelief, the clients, staff, and interns mobilized quickly by writing letters and calling the governor's office and local representatives.

Deborah Woodford, director of the Schiff Center, the Cambridge-Somerville Social Club and the North Charles Mental Health Clinic kept in touch with the directors of other programs throughout the Commonwealth. By sharing information and pertinent telephone numbers, they helped the cause immensely.



Even though the regular program continued at the Center, in between groups and during free time clients and staff used the phones to register their outrage at Romney's decision. The interns faxed the governor's office with letters and articles continually. It was an intense week for all involved.

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Once the ACT program is in place, the License Commission may issue three additional accessible taxi medallions in the coming year, through a lottery process at cost of \$50,000 per medallion. Proceeds from the medallion sale may be used to help fund the ACT management program into the future.

(Grassroots continued from page 1)

The main point of all the calls, letter writing, faxes and interviews with newspapers, was to emphasize that it was not financially beneficial to the Commonwealth to close psychiatric day treatment centers because clients might encounter increasing difficulties in day-to-day functioning and turn to hospital emergency rooms and inpatient care for help. Therefore, advocates reasoned, it would cost much more money for the Commonwealth in the long run.

After only five days of intense self-advocacy on the part of day treatment clients, the governor changed his decision. Advocates successfully argued that day treatment programs were much more cost-effective than hospital care. The clients, interns and staff breathed a collective sigh of relief and felt empowered that their efforts had worked in their favor. However, everyone involved continues to be vigilant that this problem or other related problems may come up again.

--By Maureen Coyne

Local Art Studio Wins Gold Star Award

In March the Cambridge Arts Council announced that the *Eight Faces of Truth* mural produced by Outside the Lines Studio has been named a 2003 Gold Star Project by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The studio will be honored for their accomplishments at a special award ceremony on April 12 at a statewide conference for local community arts council members. (See "Upcoming Events..." listing for details.)

Outside the Lines Studio received Cambridge Arts Council funding for *Eight Faces of Truth*, an outdoor mural consisting of eight self-portraits by artists with profound developmental and mental disabilities. The

2003 Taxi Driver of the Year Award



Posing with his wheelchair-accessible taxicab, Gustavo Hernandez is the 2003 winner of the Taxicab Driver of the Year Award, presented in March by the Cambridge License Commission

mural will be placed in public spaces throughout Cambridge starting in June 2003. Locations for display are still being sought and selected. For those who can't wait, browse the Outside the Lines Studio website at www.outsidethelinesstudio.com or visit their gallery at 25-D Street in East Cambridge to see the mural. Wheelchair access is limited; call 617-252-0966 for more information.

This public art installation is intended to confront the stigma of negative labels, to educate the community about a commonly marginalized and invisible

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-Michelle Gilbert, Outside the Lines Studio

population and to challenge preconceptions about mental retardation. Outside the Lines Studio, located in East Cambridge, provides individuals with developmental disabilities the tools and materials needed to create art and the supports to define themselves as artists.



Outside the Lines Studio artists use common art materials in unconventional ways, often incorporating found items from the streets. This process returns lost value to that which was seen as unusable, a phenomenon analogous to the experiences of the artists themselves. "I am an artist," says Outside the Lines Studio member Michelle Gilbert. While this statement may sound commonplace, for most people living under the label of mental retardation it is a declaration of independence. Labels sometimes deny people the opportunity to define their occupations, their interests, and even themselves.

The Gold Star award program was established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to document innovative programs funded through local community arts councils. The awards recognize programs that foster collaboration, build community and showcase the work of individual artists. Like all locally funded art projects, these programs frequently

address the needs and interests of underserved audiences.



-William Pimental, Outside the Lines Studio

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra's "Access to the Best Music" Program

Performing at Harvard's Sanders Theatre, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra offers discounted admission to Orchestra events through its Access to the Best Music Program. Since 1983, the Access Program has been making available some of the best seats in the house to low-income music lovers who are elderly or who have disabilities. The Orchestra proudly notes that individuals with disabilities routinely make up a third of their concert-goers.



Tickets are available on a first come, first served basis. Due to the economy and limited box office staffing, the Orchestra requests that patrons purchase tickets for all six concerts. Through the Access Program, the cost is \$36 per person for the entire season. For those able to afford the regular prices, tickets begin at \$9 per concert, or \$54 per person for the full season. Contact Pro Arte at (617) 661-7067 or <proarate@bu.edu> for more information or for an application to the Access Program.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- April 1 **RALLY OUTSIDE the STATE HOUSE** at 11:30 a.m. to PROTECT HEALTH CARE for people with disabilities. Medicaid (MassHealth) services are under peril of being cut even more. Enrollment in CommonHealth may also be further restricted, parts of the PCA program switched to Medicaid thus losing the independent living emphasis, and reimbursement rates for providers further reduced. Letters to all legislators can be sent to the State House, Boston, MA 02133. Call State Representatives at 617-722-2000, State Senators at 617-722-1455. The rally is sponsored by Health Care for All. For more information, call Boston Center for Independent Living at 617-338-6665 voice, 617-338-6662 TTY.
- April 2 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2 to 3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or <woman@braintrust.org> for more information.
- April 2 **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- April 8 **Outdoor Explorations (OE) information night** will introduce attendees to the wide variety of outdoor adventure programs OE provides through "open enrollment" and on a contract basis to schools, corporations and other organizations. Come to the library room at Christ Church, Zero Garden Street in Cambridge, 6:30-7:30 p.m., to learn about the kayaking, backpacking, sailing, white water rafting, rock climbing, cycling, snow-shoeing experience that OE provides for people of all abilities, including physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional, psychiatric, and multiple disabilities. OE staff have extensive experience producing safe, accessible, enjoyable events that offer a chance for people of all ages to try new adventures in a supportive environment. Please RSVP to Sarah Sommer at <ssommer@outdoorex.org> or call 781-395-4999 voice or 781-395-4184 TTY. ASL Interpreter will be provided, other accommodations provided upon request.
- April 8 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software that meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Go to their website at <<http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users>> and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- April 10 **Leadership Development in Sport and Inclusive Recreation for People with Disabilities**, a conference presented by the United States Sport and Wellness Center (USSWC) for Persons with Disabilities of Springfield College in conjunction with the Massachusetts Governor's Committee on Physical Fitness and Sports. The \$45 registration fee for this one-day event includes lunch and all handouts. The program will include inclusive outdoor recreation and education programs, adapting current programs, community recreation and sport programs and designing youth activities. There will also be demonstrations of adaptive programs. The conference will be held at the Brennan Center, 45 Island Pond Road in Springfield, MA. For more information contact the USSWC at 413-748-3709 voice or 413-748-3828 fax.

- April 10 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 3rd floor Resource Room, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- April 10 **Stroke Support Group** at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For more information contact Melissa Terrien at 800-922-8290, x343.
- April 12 **Whitewater Rafting with Outdoor Explorations** in Lowell, MA for people 18 and older. Outdoor Explorations (OE) works to challenge perceptions and change lives of people with and without disabilities through shared activities in the outdoors. The organization specifically designs its programs for people of all ages, with and without cognitive, sensory, physical, mental and multiple disabilities. Experience adventure, learn rafting basics and enjoy a journey down one of New England's premier whitewater rivers. Registration is \$75. For more information check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>, call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorex.org>
- April 15 **Disability Policy Consortium** (DPC) monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1 to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1 in Boston. For more information contact Robert Snierson, Chair, <rsnierson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- April 15 **Cambridge Group for Parents with Children on the Autism Spectrum** meets the third Tuesday of each month, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Family and Children's Services, 929 Mass. Ave, floor 01. For more information contact Christi Papazian at the Autism Support Center, 978-777-9135 or <asc@naarc.org> or check the website at <www2.shore.net/~nsarc>.
- April 16 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see April 2 listing for details.)
- April 17 **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC Somerville Area Office at 5 Middlesex Ave., Suite 302 in Somerville. Business meeting 10 am to 12 noon; Support Group 12 to 1 pm. For more information contact Jim Fratolillo at 617-204-3854 (voice), 617-204-3847 (fax) or Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 (voice).
- April 20 **Jesus Christ Superstar Audio-Described Performance**, 7 p.m. at the Wang Theater in Boston. This acclaimed musical by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber has become a theatrical legend as powerful and compelling today as when it was first performed in 1971. Tickets are \$28-70 with seating available in all parts of the theatre. To purchase tickets, reserve headsets, request large print or Braille playbills or arrange special seating call 617-532-1104, visit the Wang Theatre Box Office at 270 Tremont Street, Mon.- Sat. 10 am to 6 pm or email <mkemler@wangcenter.org>.
- April 23 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.

- April 24 **Metamorphosis: The Fiber Art of Judith Scott – On Women as Outsider Artists**, lecture by John MacGregor at Lesley University, 1815 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge. There will be a Reception at 6 pm in Stebbins Hall with the lecture following at 7 pm in the Marran Theatre in Wolfard House. John MacGregor's research and writing has been devoted to the interdisciplinary study of psychiatry/psychoanalysis and art. Judith Scott, a woman with multiple disabilities, creates larger than life, 3-dimensional, abstract fiber structures. For more information contact Christopher Smalley at 617-441-1895 or <smalleyc@vinfen.org>.
- May 1-31 **Cambridge Walks - Art at Your Feet** is a campaign to get people walking and exercising more. Cambridge Health Alliance has teamed up with the Cambridge Arts Council and *New Balance* athletic shoes to provide interesting vistas and prizes including a grand prize of a Walking-Shopping Spree in Cambridge. Find one of the hundred specially marked Golden Shoes hidden around public art installations throughout the City and redeem it for a free pair of *NB* walking shoes. Watch for details to come.
- May 3 **Sailing at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. Under the instruction of a skilled sailor and as part of a team, learn about rigging, knots, tacking and jibing. You will use state-of-the-art keelboats that combine stability with speed. Registration for this full day adventure is \$50. This program is offered again on May 17, June 14, August 10 and Sept. 14. For more information check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>, call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorexpl.org>
- May 7 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see April 2 listing for details.)
- May 8 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 3rd floor Resource Room, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- May 8 **Stroke Support Group** at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For more information contact Melissa Terrien at 800-922-8290, x343
- May 8 **Reception at the Gateway Gallery**, 6-8 p.m. for "The Human Condition: Images of People in Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture," art exhibit running from March 31-June 7. Gateway ARTS is a Vinfen service representing award-winning artists with disabilities. The Gallery at 62 Harvard Street in Brookline is open Mon-Fri 9:00-4:30 and Sat noon -5 p.m. For more information call 617-73-1577 or check their website at <www.gatewayarts.org>.
- May 13 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. See April 8 listing above for details.
- May 17 **Sailing at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. (For details see listing under May 3.)
- May 20 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1 to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston. For more information contact Robert Snierson, Chair, <rsnierson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations. Examples of our ongoing work include:

- Work with various City departments to ensure **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) and related state and federal disability rights laws;
- Provide free **disability awareness training** upon request for any Cambridge business or nonprofit entity;
- Issue **temporary disability parking permits** to Cambridge residents;
- Cosponsor the **taxi discount coupon program** with the Cambridge Council on Aging; and
- Facilitate additional **accessible parking spaces** through the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
part of the Department of Human Service Programs

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